

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T AMMAN 1064

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS PFOR, MASSJO, US MO, IR

SUBJECT: MORROCCAN ASSISTANCE

REF: AMMAN 1006 AND PREVIOUS

1 SUMMARY: KING ASKED ME TO SEE HIM FEB 26. ALSO IN ATTENDANCE WERE PRIME MINISTER, CINC JAF BIN SKAKER, AMBASAODR OF MOROCCO TAXI AND MOROCCAN AIR FORCE CHIEF KHABBAJ. IN A CONFUSED MEETING FOLLOWING EMERGED: (A) KHABBAJ CLAIMED HE HAD BEEN TOLD IN WASHINGTON AND TEHERAN THAT EVERYTHING IS ALL SET FOR THE TRANSFER OF 16 IRANIAN 155 GUNS AND 6 F-5A AIRCRAFT TO MOROCCO DIRECTLY, BUT WITH ACTUAL TRANSPORTATION TO TAKE PLACE THROUGH JORDAN; (B) JORDANIANS ARE ALL SET TO GO WITH 36 106 MM RECOILESS RIFLES; (C) JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER ASKS THAT WE NOW GO AHEAD WITH CONGRESS ON TRANSFER OF 20 F-5A'S (HE DID NOT MAKE CLEAR TO MOROCCANS THAT THERE IS A HOLD ON THIS FROM JORDANIAN SIDE AND ASKED THAT WE PROTECT THAT INFORMATION); AND (D) REQUESTED ALSO THAT WE DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT JORDANIANS SEND IMMEDIATELY POSSIBLY UP TO SIX AIRCRAFT (F-5A'S) TO MOROCCO WHICH WILL REMAIN UNDER THE CONTROL OF JORDAN, WITH TRANSFER TO TAKE PLACE AS SOON AS U.S. APPROVAL IS RECEIVED. KHABBAJ MADE THE POINT THAT WITH SAHARA TRIPARTITE TRANSFER AGREEMENT DUE TO BE IMPLEMENTED OFFICIALLY ON FEBRUARY 28, MOROCCO IS PARTICULARLY WORRIED ABOUT AN ATTACK ON THAT DATE AND WOULD LIKE TO BOLSTER ITS AIRCRAFT RESOURCES VISIBLY BY THAT TIME. THEY KNOW THAT 20 AIRCRAFT WILL NOT WIN A WAR, BUT THEY BELIEVE

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THAT NUMBER WILL BE A HELPFUL DETERRENT. JORDANIANS HAVE AGREED TO

TRANSFER OF 20 AIRCRAFT ON CONDITION THAT 20 WILL BE RETURNED TO JORDAN AS SOON AS IT IS CLEAR THAT THERE WILL BE NO WAR. IF THEY ARE LOST THEY WILL BE REPLACED WITH COMPARABLE AIRCRAFT (PRESUMABLY F-5E'S) SINCE WE UNDERSTAND NO F-5A'S ARE AVAILABLE. KHABBAJ WAS GIVEN A LETTER FROM KING TO SHAH SIGNIFYING GOJ WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT IRANIAN EQUIPMENT (FOR RE-TRANSFER TO MOROCCO) OR ALTERNATIVELY

TO HAVE IT PASS THROUGH JORDAN. KHABBAJ IS RETURNING TO TEHERAN THIS EVENING AND BACK TO JORDAN LATER TONIGHT OR TOMORROW ON JORDAN CHARTER AIRCRAFT. ASKS FOR REPLY ON STATUS OUR RELEASE OF EQUIPMENT TO MOROCCO AT THAT TIME. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A SWIRLING TRI-LINGUAL SERIES OF MEETINGS JORDANIANS AND MOROCCANS WORKED OUT SOME OF THE DETAILS OF ASSISTANCE TO MOROCCO. IN MID-MORNING CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER, HE TOLD ME THAT COL KHABBAJ HAD JUST ARRIVED FROM IRAN WHERE APPARENTLY HE WAS TOLD THAT EQUIPMENT FROM IRAN WOULD ONLY BE TRANSFERRED TO JORDAN AND WHAT JORDAN DID WITH IT AFTER THAT WAS JORDAN'S BUSINESS. HE SAID KHABBAJ HAD GONE TO TEHERAN TO THANK SHAH FOR THE GIFT OF EQUIPMENT, HE WAS REPORTEDLY TOLD, "THERE IS NOTHING TO THANK US FOR, WE ARE NOT GOING TO GET INTO THE MIDDLE OF THAT MESS. IT IS AN ARAB PROBLEM AND THE ARABS HAVE TO SOLVE IT. WE ARE GOING TO GIVE KING HUSSEIN SOME MILITARY EQUIPMENT, AND IF HE WANTS TO GIVE IT TO YOU THAT IS HIS BUSINESS."

2. SUBSEQUENTLY KING CALLED ME TO THE ROYAL DIWAN. WHILE I WAS WAITING, RIFAI SLIPPED IN AND TOLD ME THAT WE ARE CALLING YOU IN WITH THE MOROCCANS TO DISCUSS THE TRANSFER QUESTIONS." PLEASE DO NOT TELL THEM WE HAVE ASKED YOU NOT TO GO AHEAD WITH THE LETTER CONGRESS ON THE F-5A'S". I TOLD HIM I WOULD DO MY BEST IF THAT IS WHAT IS WHAT HE WANTED.

3. SHORTLY WE WERE USHERED IN TO SEE THE KING. PARTICIPANTS NOTED IN SUMMARY. THE CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE IN ENGLISH FRENCH, JORDANIAN ARABIC, AND KHABBAJ'S NEARLY INCOMPREHENSIBLE MOROCCAN ARABIC ON WHICH RIFAI, KING AND BIN SHAKER FROM TIME TO TIME FILLED ME IN.

4. FIRST PROBLEM ADDRESSED WAS WHO HAD DONE WHAT TO WHOM ON QUESTION OF TRANSFER OF IRANIAN HOWITZERS. I TOLD KING MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION WAS THAT I WAS STILL AWAITING INSTRUCTIONS FROM
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WASHINGTON TO SEEK JORDANIAN THIRD PARTY TRANSFER ASSURANCES SO THAT THE GUNS COULD BE TRANSFERRED TO JORDAN. KHABBAJ SAID THAT SUCH WAS NOT THE CASE. IRANIAN COURT MINISTER ALAM HAD JUST TOLD HIM THAT IRAN WAS PREPARED TO HAVE THE GUNS, AND 6 F-5A'S AS WELL, GO DIRECTLY FROM IRAN TO MOROCCO BUT TRANSITING JORDAN THEREFORE, MOROCCAN ASSURANCES ON NO -TRANSFER COVERED THE DEAL JORDAN'S WERE NOT REQUIRED. HE FURTHER ASSERTED THAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD IN WASHINGTON THAT THIS PART OF THE ARRANGEMENT WAS

ALL SET. I SAID THAT I WAS NOT AWARE THAT IRAN HAD ASKED OFFICIALLY FOR PERMISSION TO TRANSFER THE EQUIPMENT TO ANY PARTY BUT WAS NOT SURE THAT I HAD BEEN INFORMED ABOUT ALL THE ACTIONS THAT MIGHT HAVE TAKEN PLACE. I AGREED THAT I WOULD SEEK IMMEDIATE CLARIFICATION FROM WASHINGTON ON THE PRESENT STATE OF PLAY ON THIS POINT. IN ADDITION, IT DEVELOPED THAT IRAN HAD INDICATED TO KHABBAJ THAT IT WANTED A LETTER FROM HUSSEIN SAYING HE WAS READY TO AGREE TO THIS PROCEDURE. KING SAID OF COURSE HE DID, BUT THOUGHT THE LETTER HAD TO GO FROM HIM TO US. I INDICATED THAT IF THE WEAPONS WERE TO GO FROM IRAN TO JORDAN AND THEN FROM JORDAN TO MOROCCO THAT WAS TRUE. KING SAID HE WAS READY TO PROVIDE ANY SORT OF A LETTER REQUIRED AND HAD PRIME MINISTER DICTATE A LETTER TO SHAH, A COPY OF WHICH WAS LATER GIVEN TO ME (SEPTEL).

5. CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO 36 106 MM RECOILESS RIFLES WHICH JORDAN WAS PREPARED TO SEND TO MOROCCO. I TOLD KING THAT IN PRINCIPLE IT LOOKED ALRIGHT TO ME, BUT I HAD NOT BEEN TOLD THAT CONGRESS HAD BEEN INFORMED NOR HAD I BEEN GIVEN A GREEN LIGHT ON THE TRANSFER. WE HAD JUST BEEN NOTIFIED YESTERDAY BY JAF THAT GUNS WERE TO COME FROM FMS HOLDINGS; AND THEREFORE, WE COULD DISPENSE WITH THE QUESTION OF ACQUIRING RESIDUAL RIGHTS. I TOLD HIM I WOULD ALSO SEEK A WASHINGTON GREEN LIGHT ON THIS POINT.

6. NEXT ISSUE ADDRESSED WAS THE 20 JORDANIAN F-5A'S. THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF DISCUSSION ON THE SUBJECT. WHAT IT BOILED DOWN TO WAS FACT THAT KING HASSAN SENT A MESSAGE THROUGH KHABBAJ THAT COULD HAVE ANYTHING HE WANTED IN RETURN. HUSSEIN THEN WAS PUT ON SPOT AND SAID THAT HIS WEAPONS WERE MOROCCAN WEAPONS AND THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO MAKE CONDITIONS. JORDAN NEEDED THE AIRCRAFT FOR ITS OWN TRAINING PROGRAMS, BUT MOROCCO COULD HAVE THEM IF IT WAS FACING A WAR. KHABBAJ THEN INDICATED THAT IF THERE WAS NO WAR, THE PLANES COULD QUICKLY BE FLOWN BACK TO JORDAN TO CONTINUE IN USE IN TRAINING PROGRAMS HERE. IF ANY PLANES WERE LOST, MOROCCO

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WOULD UNDERTAKE TO REPLACE THEM WITH A COMPARABLE AIRCRAFT. BUT TO REPLACE 20 F-5AS WITH E'S WOULD COST MOROCCO 60 OR 70 MILLION DOLLARS, THE A'S WERE ONLY WORTH SOMETHING OVER A MILLION DOLLARS EACH. THEY ASKED ME WHEN THE MOROCCAN'S WOULD BE READY. I SAID THAT I THOUGHT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE FOR THE FIRST GROUP MIGHT BE IN SEPTEMBER 1977. THE PRIME MINISTER THEN TURNED TO ME AND SAID THAT JORDAN WAS READY TO GO AHEAD TO THE CONGRESS WITH THE TRANSFER OF THE 20 F-5A'S. I TOLD HIM I WOULD FORWARD HIS REQUEST AND SEEK AN EARLY ANSWER.

7. COLONEL KHABBAJ THEN ASKED RIFAI IF JORDAN COULD NOT FLY OVER SOME F-5A'S BEFORE THE 28TH - DETACHMENT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL. THEY COULD REMAIN UNDER THE CONTROL OF JORDANIAN PILOTS AND WOULD NOT BE USED IN A FIGHT, BUT MIGHT HELP IN INFLUENCING THE ALGERIANS. OGLCCCT FEARED A BUST UP WHEN SPAIN OFFICIALLY LEFT THE SAHARAN

TERRITORY ON THE 28TH. RIFAI ASKED ME ABOUT DOING THIS, AND I SAID THAT IT WOULD BE BEST IF I TALKED TO WASHINGTON BEFORE GOING AHEAD WITH SUCH A MOVE.

8. MOROCCANS ALSO ASKED FOR JORDANIAN TECHNICIANS TO HELP WITH SIDEWINDER MISSILES AND SOME OF THE OTHER TECHNICAL TASKS, AND KING SAID HE WOULD SUPPLY THEM.

9. KING ASKED IF WE WOULD HELP WITH OVERFLIGHT CLEARANCES FOR TRANSFER OF THE AIRCRAFT. HE SAID THAT JORDANIANS WOULD BE REQUESTING ASSISTANCE FOR OVERFLIGHT, LANDING AND REFUELING FOR TRANSFER FROM GREECE (CRETE), ITALY (SIGONEELA US NAVAL AIR STATION IN SICILY) AND SPAIN ,POSSIBLY PALMA, MAJORCA. I SAID THAT WE HAD AGREED TO ASSIST IN THESE REQUESTS AND WE WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH RJAF TO GET THE DETAILS.

10. AFTER THE MEETING I TALKED WITH CINC JAF BIN SHAKER, WHO IS MOST UNHAPPY AT THE KING'S AND PRIME MINISTER'S GENEROSITY IN AGREEING TO PROVIDE THE AIRCRAFT ON THE BASIS OF A QUICK RETACV. HE SAID THAT EVEN IF WE GET THEM BACK SOON, HE HAS NO FAITH THAT THEY WILL BE WELL CARED FOR WHILE THEY ARE AWAY AND THEY WILL HAVE ALL THAT ADDED TIME PUT ON THEM IN FLYING BACK AND FORTH ACROSS THE MEDITERRANEAN. HE INDICATED, FOR THE FIRST TIME TO ME, A SERIOUS DISLIKE OF THE MOROCCANS FOR THE WAY THEY HAD HANDLED THEMSELVES AT RABAT, IN LETTING THE TERRORIST GROUP GO THAT PLOTTED AGAINST HUSSEIN AT RABAT AND FOR THEIR NON-SUITOLM OF JORDAN DURING

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THE 1970 CIVIL WAR AGAINST THE PALESTINAIANS HERE.

11. ACTION REQUESTED: AN EXPEDITIOUS ANSWER TO THE QUESTIONS POSED BY THE JORDANIANS AND RECORDED IN THE SEVERAL PARAGRAPHS ABOVE.
PICKERING

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